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...REPORT...

-----OF THE-----

HISTORICAL COMMITTEE.

-----PRESENTED TO -----

NINTH ANNUAL CONVENTION,

UNITED SONS OF CONFEDERATE VETERANS,

-----HELD IN-----

NASHVILLE, TENN.

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, June 14th, 15th, and 16th, 1904.

PRINTED BY PALFREY-DAMERON CO., LTD.,
NEW ORLEANS, LA.

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The report of the Historical Committee was next called for. Dr. Thomas M. Owen, Commander of the Alabama Division, and also the Director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, came forward and presented the report, which was received with applause. It is as follows:

Comrades:

A report of the work of the Historical Committee since its appointment to the present time is respectfully submitted. This report will be unusually brief, and will deal altogether in a summary way with an account of what has been undertaken and accomplished, or stimulated by the Committee. I purposely avoid any discussion of historical subjects as such. For years secession, the origin of the war, battles, casualties, kindred subjects, etc., have been under review, and in a sense may be said to have been fully and definitely settled. What is said here has reference solely to the historical activities which have engaged the Committee.

APPOINTMENT AND INAUGURATION OF WORK.

The Committee was announced October 14th, 1903, in General Order No. 2, as follows, viz:

Thomas M. Owen, Chairman, Montgomery, Ala.
Edwin P. Cox, Richmond, Va.
Dr. Patrick H. Mell, Clemson College, S. C.
Dr. Walter L. Fleming, Morgantown, W. Va.
Dunbar Rowland, Jackson, Miss.
Ed. Porter Thompson, Jr., Frankfort, Ky.

W. Armistead Collier, Jr., Memphis, Tenn.

William F. Jones, Elberton, Ga.

R. B. Haughton, St. Louis, Mo.

Homer D. Wade, Waco, Texas.

Rev. J. M. Gross, Vinita, Ind. Ty.

Duncan U. Fletcher, Jacksonville, Fla.

W. H. McLellan, New Orleans, La.

Prof. D. Y. Thomas, Conway, Ark.

L. S. Boyd, Washington, D. C.

J. Mercer Garnett, Baltimore, Md.

Marshall D. Haywood, Raleigh, N. C.

Immediately following my appointment, or on October 19th, 1903, I wrote at length to the several members of the Committee, calling attention to their appointment, and urging the importance of the historical features of our organization. Necessary official literature was placed in their hands, and they were asked to take up carefully their work as set forth in Sections 2, 5, 6, 9, 90 and 92, of our Constitution. It was pointed out that the Chairman must not be relied upon to do all the work, and they were asked to act in their particular fields in such way as seemed to them conducive of the best results.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES.

In a general way the activities of the Committee have been directed to the development of every phase of our history, as well as historical effort in the South. By correspondence and discussion an effort has been made to impress upon our members and others the fact that ours is a patriotic, historical and benevolent organization. This fundamental fact has been emphasized. Camp officers and members have been encouraged to collect from participants written accounts, narratives, memoirs, histories of battles, episodes and occurrences of the war; and they have been urged to gather authentic data, statistics, documents, reports, plans, maps and other material for an impartial history of the Confederate side, and to collect and preserve war relics and mementos, such as commissions, letters and other manuscripts; uniforms, swords, arms and equipment.

It is felt that our efforts have not been altogether in vain, and that much valuable material has been collected, which has appeared in the publications of societies, or in the magazine or newspaper press of the South.

COMPILATION OF WAR RECORDS.

One of the objects of our Confederation is thus set forth in our Constitution, Section 6, Article II:

“To make and perpetuate a record of the service of every member
“of the United Confederate Veterans, and all other living Confederate

"Veterans, and, as far as possible, of those of their comrades who have preceded them into eternity."

This provision grew out of an exalted appreciation of the importance of preserving the records of individual soldiers. Fortunately, for the more speedy and successful accomplishment of the ends desired, Congress, on February 25th, 1903, enacted:

"That under the direction of the Secretary of War the Chief of the Record and Pension Office shall compile, from such official records as are in the possession of the United States, and from such other authentic records as may be obtained by loan from the various States and other official sources, a complete roster of the officers and enlisted men of the Union and Confederate Armies."

Acting with commendable promptness the Secretary of War addressed a communication to the Governors of the several States, announcing his readiness to proceed at once with the compilation, and inviting the co-operation of States, societies and individuals. The following extract from this communication will serve to set forth the wishes and views of the department:

"There will be little or no difficulty in making the Union part of the roster complete, but there will be great difficulty with regard to the Confederate, partly because of the incompleteness of the collection of Confederate records in the possession of this Department. It is of the first importance, therefore, that no effort shall be spared to secure the temporary loan to the War Department, for the purpose of copying, of any and all authentic Confederate records that can be found anywhere. Many of these records are in the possession of the various States, and it is hoped will be made readily accessible, but there are others that are widely scattered among historical and memorial associations and private citizens. The problem of how to find and procure the loan of these scattered records is a difficult one, but is one that must be solved in order that the Confederate soldier shall receive the full credit that is due him in the roster that is to be compiled."

The appointment of Roster Commissioners followed, and so far as I can learn they have been earnest in their efforts to render all possible assistance. I have been in correspondence with the Commissioners, and am able to bring you the gratifying information that the compilation will be approximately complete for nearly every Southern State.

As Chairman of the Historical Committee I have urged our members everywhere to aid this worthy enterprise. I have in numbers of ways encouraged the work in various States, and I am the official Roster Commissioner for Alabama.

I renew the appeal that I have constantly made, that all individuals, Camps of Confederate Veterans, Camps of Sons of Veterans, Chapters of the Daughters of the Confederacy, and Historical Societies, having rosters, muster or pay-rolls, war diaries or journals, reports, commissions,

discharges, paroles, or other war papers, should forward them to the Commissioners for their respective States in order that full credit may be given in the rosters being compiled.

CONFEDERATE FLAGS.

A detailed history of the flags of the Confederate States, or of the flags, banners, markers, and guidons, in use in the South, whether as State emblems, or by the soldiers in their several commands, is now in process of compilation by Mr. P. D. Harrison, of Manchester, N. H. Valuable assistance has been extended Mr. Harrison. He has had reasonable success in collecting data, and I am sure his work will be creditable. He is still anxious to obtain additional information, and all persons having facts concerning flags, should communicate with him at once.

I wish to suggest here that it is the duty of all Sons of Confederate Veterans to assist their State museums or other depositories in bringing together into official custody all surviving flags or similar relics.

STATE DEPARTMENTS OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY.

The example set by Alabama, in the establishment, February 27th, 1901, of a Department of Archives and History as a separate department of State, correlating other departments, through which all of its obligations to its archives (public records) and history should be met, has encouraged the belief, from its successful operation, that such an agency is the very best and most satisfactory way of meeting this public duty. Just one year later Mississippi created a similar Department, now in successful operation. The Chairman of this Committee, who is the author of the Alabama Department Act, had, previous to his appointment as Chairman, done everything possible to give publicity to his plan. It received the official endorsement of two successive committees of this body, and also of the Virginia Division, U. S. C. V. It has had the unqualified endorsement of students and history workers. The act has been printed and distributed far and wide.

The first Chairman of this Committee, William F. Jones, of Georgia, made an effort to secure the passage of a similar act for his State. Although he failed in his direct purpose, the Legislature of Georgia, nevertheless, created, December 16th, 1902, the office of Compiler of Georgia Records. On August 15th, 1903, in order to secure more satisfactory results a Georgia Soldier Roster Commission was created, with an appropriation of five thousand dollars, charged with the particular duty of compiling a "roll of the Georgia soldiers, sailors, and marines," in the Confederate or State service, 1861-1865.

In Florida, May 14th, 1903, an act was passed providing for the compilation and publication, under a Roster Commissioner, of a history and roster of all soldiers for that State in any and all wars in which they have served.

Virginia, May 7th, 1904, created the office of Secretary of Confederate Records, whose duties are to collect all records of Confederate soldiers and sailors from Virginia, and to co-operate with the U. S. War Department in making the compilation of rosters authorized by Congress.

In Mississippi, Georgia, Florida and Virginia, THE PARTICULAR AGENCIES ADOPTED are the direct result of the agitation in behalf of State-supported historical work which had its first affirmative expression in the establishment of the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Whether the State is to meet its duty in the premises by creating a separate Department of State, or by voting appropriations to Historical Societies, seems to have so far been settled in the South in favor of the former idea or plan. That this plan will ultimately prevail in the whole South can hardly be doubted.

As it has done in the past, this Committee can in future perform no higher duty than to co-operate in securing the establishment of such departments, for if created, from them in each State will radiate an influence which will lead to the early and ready accomplishment of our cherished historical objects.

MISCELLANEOUS.

In addition to the foregoing, the Committee has given much time and attention to many other matters of importance. It has endeavored to secure the use of sound and correct historical books in our schools, it has encouraged the marking of historical sites, and has begun the collection of data in reference to Southern monuments, it has encouraged the marking of sites and the erection of monuments in the National military parks located in the South; and it has encouraged the periodical publications devoted to our "Cause."

A careful report on our Confederation as an historical organization was prepared for the Carnegie Institution, for use in its "Handbook to Literary and Learned Societies."

Some progress has been made in the preparation of a bibliography of all current war literature, with critical notes and estimates. The plan involves a regular continuation, and also the compilation of all early titles until a full bibliography of the war between the States has been completed.

CONCLUSION.

The foregoing represents in bare outline some of the efforts of the present Historical Committee during the eight months of its existence. We have hardly been able to do more than organize and project plans when the time has come for us to give an account of our stewardship

and to surrender our commissions. Should we be called into service for the coming year, our experience will fit us for wider achievement.

The Chairman desires to make public acknowledgment for such help as has been extended by his associates and others; and particularly to the Commander-in-chief, Hon. William McL. Fayssoux, for numerous courtesies.

THOMAS M. OWEN,
Chairman.

It was moved and duly seconded that the report be adopted.
Carried.

Comrade J. C. Davidson, Commandant Camp Broadus, Louisville, Ky., extended an invitation to the Convention to come with the Veterans to Louisville, in 1905.

Comrade Haughton extended an invitation to the Sons to attend the reception at the Missouri Bldg., St. Louis, on June 20th.

It was moved and duly seconded that report of the Historical Committee be printed in separate form and distributed.



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